

BEWARE OF THE FEAR OF MAN

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The following is excerpted from an article by Dave Hunt entitled "The Great Snare"-

It is far easier to stand true to Christ in the face of jeers and opposition from atheists than to resist the seemingly sincere persuasions of fellow Christians who urge one to "be positive" and to avoid offending others in order to be "more effective for Christ."

How often have I agonized before the Lord in attempting to understand why so many Christians, even leaders among them, will compromise God's Word, water down the gospel and join in ecumenical partnerships which suppress the truth! Surely the desire to "please men" plays a large role.

The Catholic Herald of June 2, 1993, reported that Rabbi Howard Hirsch of Temple Shalom in Colorado Springs, and Richard Hanifen, that city's Roman Catholic Bishop, were outraged that "Jewish and Catholic youth were being evangelized at school." They met with Christian leaders in Colorado Springs who agreed that such evangelization was improper. Christian students were rebuked for seeking to rescue their school friends from a lost eternity in obedience to Christ's command to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

A "Covenant of Mutual Respect" was drawn up in which the parties, in "a commitment to justice, mercy, righteousness and peace for all," agreed to respect one another's diverse beliefs and to avoid "polarization." Try to imagine Peter, James and John, when forbidden by the Sanhedrin to preach the gospel, signing an agreement to cease such activities out of respect for diverse beliefs among Roman citizens! Or Elijah signing such an agreement with the prophets of Baal, or Paul with the Judaizers in Jerusalem or the pagan priests in Ephesus! Jesus would never have been crucified had he joined with the rabbis in such a deal.

The Covenant was published in the local paper as "A Message to the People of Colorado Springs." It was signed by such notables (in addition to Hirsch and Hanifen) as the president of Focus on the Family, the president of International Students, Inc., the Young Life director of Institute of Youth Ministries, The Navigators director of U.S. Ministries, and various local pastors, some evangelical, some not. Commending this amazing compromise, Lauren Libby, vice president of The Navigators, said, "It's good to see the Body of Christ unified in Colorado Springs."

Everywhere we see the powerful influence of the fear of man and the deceitful fruit of the seemingly legitimate desire to please man. It plagues every family. The hardest people to witness to are those of one's own household. To faithfully share the gospel often cuts one off from family and friends. The same pressure not to offend is found in every club, whether it be the

Lions or Rotary or some other. Christians are kept from being the servants of Christ for fear of offending fellow members with the truth. Unfortunately, the same fear operates in Christian groups as well.

The fear of man holds sway in Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition where evangelicals, Catholics, Mormons, humanists and others work together for conservative political and social goals. An uncompromising witness for Christ must be avoided because it would offend some members and break up the coalition.

This great snare haunts the world of Christian media. To be a guest on CBN or TNB or even Moody Radio, etc., one must avoid offending listeners and supporters, which often prevents one from speaking the truth in love from Scripture. The "Christian psychology" establishment exerts tremendous pressure in this regard. I am banned from most Christian radio and TV because what I say undermines confidence in the huge and profitable "Christian psychology" industry, which happens to provide Christian radio's largest advertising revenue and therefore must not be challenged with truth.

Tragically, there is a growing tendency to present Christ in a way that appeals to "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Those who "receive Christ" on that basis have believed "another gospel" about "another Jesus" (2 Cor. 11:4). There is an "offence of the cross" (Gal. 5:11). A GOSPEL DESIGNED TO OFFEND NO ONE IS A FRAUD THAT DAMNS INSTEAD OF SAVES. We must adhere to the truth of God's Word out of love for our Lord and for the souls for whom He died. May God deliver us from the great snare of "lov[ing] the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43! We "cannot serve God and mammon" (Mt. 6:24) (Dave Hunt, "The Great Snare," The Berean Call, August 1995; P.O. Box 7019, Bend, Oregon 97708).